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travail has a power over people that a lesson learned by rote can never have; and it will not lose its power with the progress of time, if the minister has learned in his youth the vital necessity of keeping himself in sympathetic contact with the spiritual progress of his day, and has thus been enabled to keep his message fresh and timely.

Am I assigning too large a place to the contribution of the Old Testament toward the student's equipment? I think not. At least the study of the Old Testament has done all this of which I speak and even more for many

men within the range of my own experience as a student and teacher. And if it be given a fair chance in the hands of competent teachers, it will always justify itself in the minds of competent students. The Old Testament is a great book and is capable of arousing great minds to great thoughts. It was there that Jesus found the inspiration for his life-work, and we can hardly overemphasize the value of the literature that fired his imagination and stirred his enthusiasm to splendid utterance and incomparable action.

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## CHRISTIANITY FACING A CRISIS

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This is not the first time in its long history that Christianity has had to face a crisis. More than once in recent years the Christian religion has come to a cross-road, but today we are told that it has reached the end of its journey. Many who stoutly deny this frankly admit the present crisis is more crucial than any of the conflicts from which our faith has successfully emerged in the past.

Fortunately the issue which today confronts the Christian faith is sharply defined, and the great events of the past few years have forced the problem to the center of our consciousness. It is apparent that the world-war is both

destroying and re-creating the economic and social world, and quite evident that the great upheaval is giving impetus to a similar process, for some time in progress, in the religious world. What is the issue on which the future of our faith turns? What are the questions today, the answers to which will determine whether Christianity can continue to satisfy the religious needs of thoughtful men? These are not questions such as our fathers had to answer; they are not even such questions as agitated the church a quarter of a century ago. The drift of destiny has carried us to a new field, a field filled with new values.

The validity of our faith is no longer involved in any of the questions of historicity. Whether the external world is the product of a Creative Energy occupying the stage of infinite endeavor for six short days, or the result of a progressive process always begun and never finished, is no longer a burning question; whether the Book of Job is the record of an actual experience, or the report of a masterful imagination used for noble ends is not of first importance; whether the Book of Jonah is a fact, or a bit of fiction; whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or these five books are a compilation from older documents; whether the sun stood still at the command of Joshua while the Huns of the older time were touched with the fear of Jehovah, or the passage describing the event but a quotation from a war ballad of an earlier date, are of no vital concern. Thoughtful men are no longer asking such questions. Only a few decades ago this was the battleground, where the defenders and the opponents of the faith fought fiercely. The contestants agreed that if these statements were not facts the Bible is false. It has been said that Mr. Ingersoll thought if he could prove that Moses and David made mistakes he had proved that Christianity is a mistake. The agnostics claimed that if they could establish the fallibility of the records they had demolished the inspiration of the message; the orthodox accepted the challenge, and here the issue was joined. Both felt that the validity of Christianity was in the balance.

We have left all that far behind. We now know that such controversies do not touch, much less determine, the

question of Christianity's fitness to survive. The authority of a book is not, necessarily, involved in its authorship. The thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is profoundly true, whoever wrote it. And we have learned to distinguish, in literature, between fact and truth. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is not a fact, but it is a fairly true picture of American slavery in the past century. And Hebrew fiction may be the vehicle for moral truth. An earthen vessel may contain a precious treasure. A human, faltering, faulty record may be the agency through which is conveyed a divine message.

No more is the validity of Christianity for our day involved in the question of supernaturalism. A short time ago this was the battle-ground of faith. Here again the opponents of Christianity, and her defenders, accepted the issue squarely. Some of the most distinguished scholars of the nineteenth century, and the staunchest defenders of the faith, believed that if the miracles were disproved Christianity would disappear. If Jesus were not born without a human father, if he did not change water into wine, and restore the dead to life again, then his religion is false. This was the point around which the war of words waged. The noise of that battle is now hushed. The opponents of traditional Christianity no longer argue that modern science has disproved the miraculous; they affirm that the question is outgrown, that it is obsolete, that no intelligent persons are longer interested in its discussions. While thoughtful defenders of the faith do not allow that the miraculous is thus certainly disposed of, they accommodate

themselves to the situation by the agreement that the question is not important. Whether the miracles go or remain, the spirit of Christianity abides. The virility of the gospel is not dependent upon the story of its author's supernatural birth. The marvelous message requires no miraculous background. The word needs no impetus of wonder-work. The question of burning interest is, not whether Jesus once raised a dead body, but whether he can now rouse a dull soul; not whether he long ago fed a few thousand men with some loaves and little fishes, but whether his religion will now satisfy the spiritual hunger of mankind; not whether his death upon the cross, once for all, made atonement for racial sin, but whether his philosophy points the way to social salvation here and now. These are the questions which deep-seeing men of all phases of belief are today asking. Our age is less concerned with the past exploits of Christianity than with its present potencies.

Nor is the present crisis of Christianity involved in any questions of intellectualism. It is true the Christian church continues to define discipleship in the terms of an intellectual belief, rather than in the terms of a moral purpose. And this is one reason why modern men do not respond more readily to the church's call. The open-eyed man is quite unable to regard metaphysics as more important than morals, dogma as more primary than duty, creed as more essential than character. This, however, is where the historic creeds place the emphasis. The creeds of the Christian church diverge along many doctrinal lines, but at one point

they meet; they unite in intellectualizing discipleship. Dr. Peabody in speaking of the creeds says, "they assume the primary obligation of doctrinal agreement, and imply that the Christian religion is a dogma rather than a life." In support of this amazing statement he quotes from many of the most famous creeds and confessions of Christendom. Take but one of his many illustrations, and this, the Apostle's Creed. This confession, it is shown, is concerned with the miraculous birth and death of Jesus, to the complete exclusion of the life and teaching which lie between. He was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried. The author points out that this creed leaps from the thought of Christ's birth as a helpless infant to the thought of his suffering as a helpless victim. Nothing is said of the Kingdom of God, or of our social obligations and responsibilities; not a word of our duty to our equals or to those beneath us in privilege and opportunity; not a word of the brotherhood of man or of any human relationships. Other historic Confessions are shown to be in agreement at this point. However conflicting the creeds may be in other respects, they are here in perfect accord; their lines of emphasis may diverge elsewhere but here they touch. Creed rather than conduct; dogma rather than desire, or devotion, or duty, is the test of discipleship.

However meaningful this creedal test may have been in former ages, it has little or no meaning to thoughtful, eager men today. It fails to reach them. It does not find them where they are living. Any religious state-

ment calculated to arrest the attention of this age must deal directly with life, with conduct, with human relationships. Recently a church in the Middle West, in revising its manual, appointed a committee to formulate some simple "bond of fellowship," which would not do violence to the modern mind. The following was the satisfactory result:

Our union is vital, not metaphysical; it rests in a moral purpose rather than in an intellectual belief; in an attitude and aspiration rather than in a creed or confession. We welcome to our fellowship all who desire to worship and work with others for righteousness in the individual and for justice in the social order.

The humans comprising this church have no quarrel with creeds; neither have they any affinity for them; their faces are simply turned in a different direction. And these are average folks. Christian teaching then must shift its emphasis or surrender its supremacy.

The present issue is in no way concerned with any aspects of mysticism. The dominant note in the Christian message is not a note of theology, nor is it a note of psychology. Dr. Peabody says:

Throughout the history of the Christian church the prevailing emphasis has been laid either on the reason or the emotions as the organ of a religious life. Either the reason must be convinced, or the emotions must be stirred, if Christian discipleship is to be attained. The creeds of the church have addressed the reason and invited an intellectual approval; the practice of the church has appealed to the feelings, and quickened the emotional life with affections and desires. Each of these paths to communion with God has its place in the teaching of Jesus.

Quite true, but it is a secondary place. And neither of these paths, nor both of them together, constitute the highway along which our age can approach that "life of God in the soul of man," which is the beginning and end of all religion. Ritualism and evangelism, however dissimilar in method, are one in practice; their one appeal is to the emotions. Through the subtle lure of symbol and imagery on the one hand, and through the dramatic and hectic call of the evangelist on the other, the Kingdom of Heaven is to be established. One does not know whether to regard this as trivial or tragic. To condition discipleship upon the emotional use of ancient and esoteric symbols, or upon a crisis in psychological experience, is to miss the highway on which the souls of men are now marching, as well as to misinterpret the master's meaning. "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, . . . but he that doeth the will of my Father." . . . And the impotent effort now in evidence to reclaim lost sections of Christian influence by leading men and women of this scientific age back into the twilight of mysticism, is as pitiful as the attempt of a naïve American to "get the boys out of the trenches before Christmas."

It is evident that the crisis which Christianity is now facing is not involved in any of the questions of historicity, of supernaturalism, of intellectualism, or of mysticism. These were once questions of burning interest, but are so no longer. Men today are not breathing the atmosphere, nor thinking in the terms of such questions; they speak another language, and their spirits are pitched to a different key.

The issue is one of ethics. The question is not, Are the records reliable, or do the miracles matter, or are the creeds credible, or the ways of worship important? But, Is the principle of brotherhood workable? This is the issue. Is our religion at its very center true to life. Does that central conception correspond to the fundamental facts of human nature, and does it point the way to social redemption? If not, Christianity is doomed.

There can be little controversy, among open-minded persons, as to the primary principle of Christ's teaching. It is brotherhood; it is right relationships; it can be given a complete statement in the terms of friendship; it demands co-operation and human helpfulness; it spells Democracy with a big D. *It is this and nothing more.* This is at the very heart of the gospel and lies open on the face of the Bible. Its rootage is in the soil of prophetic teaching. The Ten Commandments, after a brief recognition of the supremacy of God, deal with the problem of human relationships. "To do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God" is the prophetic ideal. Jesus said definitely, in response to a direct question, that to love God with all one's heart and one's neighbor as one's self, was to fulfil the demands of the law and the prophets; he said that his own mission was service, and he conditioned discipleship upon service. When one of his band asked who should occupy the place of great prominence in the new order, the Master replied that the capacity for service was the measure of greatness, and the greatest among them would be the one who best served. And

in his portrayal of the final judgment the ultimate test is service. Those who had fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, and ministered unto the needy; that is those who had discharged the obligations of friendship, were entitled to membership in his Kingdom. This is the cardinal principle of Christianity. There is no possibility of mistake at this point. Friendship is the very atmosphere of the New Testament. Brotherhood is the big fact in our religion.

Here then is the root of the whole matter. This is the real issue. The problem is one of relationships. Our religion imposes upon us the obligations and opportunities, the burdens and blessings, of friendship. Few will question this fact, but many will deny its feasibility. They frankly affirm that the cardinal idea of Christianity is not workable; that its ideals have no application in our practical age. This they claim is proved by the test of experience, by Christianity's failure. The Christian apologists meet this audacious challenge with the rebuttal that Christianity has not failed, because it has never been tried. But why has it not been tried? It is the business of Christianity to get itself tried. And such a trial is now in actual process. For a decade or so a few have been aware of the issue, but it required a world-war to bring the consciousness of it home to this modern, money-getting age.

It were foolish to underestimate the seriousness of the issue, while to exaggerate its importance is scarcely possible. If the question which men today are asking is not truthfully and

triumphantly answered, Christianity may continue to furnish soft solace for trustful souls, but it will lose its place as a virile, vigorous influence giving direction to the movements of civilization and quality to the morality of mankind. Even now there are those who tell us the issue is over; that the ideals of Christianity are shown to be unfit for the modern world; that it is impossible to conform to the Christian ethics and live a complete life; that one must choose between fulness and failure. Seriously it is asked, "must one not choose between the idealism of the gospel and the utilitarianism of modern life? Must he not frankly confess that the Christian law of conduct and the demands of commerce and political stability are radically opposed to each other, and that, under the circumstances of modern civilization which one can neither escape nor for the present transform, the Christian character has become an impractical dream?"

This, it is urged, is sustained by the test of experience, by the fact that Christianity has become a rite rather than a life. Sensible persons do not pretend to conform their conduct to the teaching of Jesus, for they know it is impossible, and even members of the church do not take the teaching seriously. The church does not expect its adherents to really practice the brotherhood which is the very heart of the gospel message; it is satisfied if they pay the pew-rent and conform to conventional standards. It is even urged that a serious attempt to live according to Christian ethics would prove disastrous; that if all should literally follow Jesus, all would share his

fate, the race perish. Dr. Peabody, in his recent book, has given an illuminating, one might say an alarming, view of contemporary thought at this point. "'None of us are Christians,' an English philosopher has declared, and we all know, no matter what we say, we ought not to be. We have lived a long time the professors of a creed which no one can consistently practice and which, if practiced, is as immoral as unreal." "Let us have done with pretense. Let us cease to call ourselves Christians when we do not follow Christ." Dr. Peabody does not share this philosophy, but he shows how widespread it is, and how influential the voices which proclaim it. It is stoutly urged that the altruism of the gospel is visionary, that to seek the welfare of another as one seeks one's own is to do violence to the deepest impulse of our nature. Self-advancement, self-enlargement; the will to live a full, vigorous, aggressive life, is the essential genius of our nature. Any philosophy and system of ethics or ideals, which seeks to modify this primal instinct, or limit its fulfilment, is foolish and false. A true religion is one which frankly recognizes self-interest as the first law of nature, seeks to give it right of way, and encourages its triumphant out-working in human life.

This masterful morality has been much glorified in Germany. Its greatest apostle was Nietzsche. He taught that there are two kinds of morality, and he named them the ruling and the ruled, or the master and the slave morality. And he claimed that the moral, wholesome, unrestrained men lived according to this master morality. This is

instinctive and fundamental in human life. The highest satisfaction springs from a full, vigorous expression of this will to power. But unfortunately the race is held back by the lower morality which insists that such satisfaction is wrong. That the highest virtue of the strong is not to rule, but to sacrifice and serve. This unnatural impulse, developed by the weak in their own defense, has become the greatest obstacle to human progress. The ruling morality is an evolution from the consciousness of the masterful, while the ruled morality was evolved from the souls of the weak and unfit who have faltered and fallen by the way. All depends upon whether we are under the influence of the morality of the master caste or that of the slave caste; if swayed by the former, we will regard as of the highest good all that flows from strength, power, aggressiveness, and force of will; but if by the latter we shall count that of supreme value which comes from self-sacrifice, self-surrender, self-effacement. Now according to Nietzsche the modern world has come under the sway of the slave morality, which makes eventually, if the evil is not corrected, for the survival of the unfit. "And he sets himself the task," a recent writer has said, "of transposing our moral values and putting master morality where it belongs. He looks upon the enthronement of this slave morality as a desperate attempt upon the part of the low and the base to establish themselves as powerful." With all the intensity of his impetuous nature Nietzsche undertakes to set the modern world free from the enervating influence of this slave morality. He asks for a new appraisalment

of moral values, for more wholesome ideas of right and wrong; for more lusty conceptions of good and bad. He calls upon men to face life in a defiant spirit, and to be unafraid; he urges them to be hard, and to live dangerously. Such ideas as mercy and pity and charity are pernicious since they mean transference of power from the strong to the weak, whose proper business is to serve the strong. Self-sacrifice and brotherliness and love are portrayed, not as real moral instincts at all, but merely manufactured compunctions to keep the strong from exercising power. Man is described as essentially selfish. "Any slave would be master if he could. Any employee would be in his employer's place if he were able. Any little race would be big if it knew how." Then it is no crime to do what every man's instinct prompts him to do. That is no crime; it is a virtue.

With such convictions Nietzsche has for Christianity a withering contempt. Its influence has been enervating; its touch a tarnish; its breath a blight. The virile civilization of Europe has been weakened by the slavish ideals of Christianity, so Nietzsche regards the religion of the Nazarene as a curse. Its wickedness is that of weakness. He says:

I condemn it as the greatest of all possible corruptions. It has left nothing untouched by its depravity. It combats all good red blood, all hope of life. Christianity is the one immoral shame and blemish upon the human race. It is both unreasonable and degrading. It is the most dangerous system of slave morality the world has ever known. It has waged a deadly war on the highest type of man. It has put a ban on all that is healthy in man.



This is radical language; it must be to voice the revolutionary purpose of the philosopher. Nietzsche is seeking to displace the ethics of the Nazarene with his own; he is proposing to dominate the world of man with force instead of friendship; he is boldly proclaiming that might is under a moral compulsion to establish its own standards of right. And one of the marvels of modern history is the measure of success which has attended the daring and devilish venture of this philosopher in his own land. Germany is "full up" with this philosophy. Its exploitation has become a hunger with the Hun, and with the mailed fist it is to be beaten into the brain of all mankind.

Let us frankly acknowledge that the influence of this teaching has spread far beyond the borders of Germany; it has made a marked impression in England and America. An American scholar, speaking of Nietzsche's influence, says, "a whole literature of the Superman followed in his train. Thousands of people who have never heard his name have adopted his philosophy." Another affirms that he had the courage to put into words what everyone really believes in his heart. Many unable to put the philosophy into words are diligently putting it into practice. Multitudes yield to the lure of this paganism who do not see its full import. It is, perhaps, not too much to say that the general tendency for two decades has been flowing strongly in the direction of the master philosophy. One note of its martial challenge is heard in the frequent affirmation of the young woman afresh from college, "I must live my own life"; and another in the aggressive

declaration of the industrial captain, "I am not in business for my health." And a more convincing evidence of this tendency is seen in the growing feeling that the one really unpardonable sin is failure, and in the easy tolerance shown every sin of the sinner who "arrives." The ethics of the Ten Commandments, and the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount, are good form for embellishment of Sunday worship, but must make way for the chariot of everyday success.

Here then the issue is joined. This is the crisis which Christianity is facing. We are not deeply concerned with the history or the literature of our religion; nor are the questions of miracles or mysticism of first concern; the problem awaiting solution is not one of intellectualism at all but of vitalism. The claim is made that there are many people today who thoroughly believe that the modern thought which has disposed of the supernaturalism of Christianity is now disposing of its moral ideals. It is well to remember, however, that while Christianity might part company with miracles and suffer no serious loss, if deprived of its morals there would be nothing left but an unhappy memory.

It is possible, even probable, that the retrospective historian will show that the issue of the world-war ushered in a new day for Christianity. We are fighting for democracy, and in the last analysis, democracy is friendship; it is co-operation; it is equality of opportunity, not alone in government, but in all human interests. Our President said that our aim in entering the war was to help make the world safe for

democracy, and it is probable that he meant we were going to fight for a real democracy without which this world cannot be rendered secure. Such a democracy throbs at the very heart of Christianity. Christianity spells mutualism; it affirms that weal is common-weal; it declares that nothing can be good for the bee that is bad for the hive; it insists that we are bound up in one bundle; that we share a common destiny; it makes friendship fundamental. It is brotherhood.

It is not for humans to decide whether these ideals can survive in the modern world; the gods have decreed that a

human world cannot long survive without such ideals. The hour has come for religious teachers to shift the emphasis of their teaching from the emotional to the ethical, from the mystical to the moral, from the intellectual to the vital. The men who are coming home from the trenches of Europe, as well as those rising from the bloodless vigil of prolonged agony, are looking at life with eyes from which there shines a passion for reality. This new world will tolerate, in the name of religion, nothing less than the social justice of the prophets and the race-wide friendship of the Christ.